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Witnesses Testify on America's Current and Future Threat Environment

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence on Wednesday heard testimony from expert witnesses during an open hearing regarding America's current and future threat environment.

"Threats to national security are no longer confined primarily to nation states that possess nuclear capabilities," said U.S. Rep. Peter Hoekstra, Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. "The United States annually invests a significant amount of money into its intelligence services, and understanding the threats it faces from all sources is essential to efficiently allocating resources and authorizing programs."

The issues discussed on Wednesday are among several that will be identified during congressional hearings throughout the coming year as the committee develops its annual authorization bill for U.S. intelligence services.

Witnesses testified on how a range of issues have potential implications for U.S. intelligence. These included, but were not limited to, shifts in the military and economic power structure of nation states, state sponsorship of terrorism, terrorist groups, advancements in technology and communications, the effects of globalization and global demographics.

"The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 made an important start in reshaping U.S. intelligence, but in many respects the harder part – reshaping the cultures and organizations, in addition to the organization charts – lies ahead of us," Gregory F. Treverton, Director of the Intelligence Policy Center for the RAND Corporation, stated in prepared remarks. "And there is no better place to start than at the beginning, with the threat."

Kurt M. Campbell, Senior Vice President and Director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies International Security Program and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asia and Pacific, specifically discussed the challenges posed by Asia and in particular the rapid increase in the power and influence of China.

"Indeed, every major traditional challenge to peace and stability is currently found in Asia, from the continuing dangerous stalemate on the Korean Peninsula, the increasingly

dangerous undertones in the China-Taiwan relationship, and the tinderbox quality of the nuclear competition between India and Pakistan,” Campbell stated in his written remarks. “Furthermore, while the current focus of U.S. actions in the war on terror is in the Middle East, it is arguable that the long term ‘hearts and mind’ challenge associated with Islamic politics will be found in Southeast Asia, where the largest population of Islamic followers on the planet reside.”

Michael S. Swetnam, CEO and Chairman of the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, testified that the U.S. intelligence community needs to develop the ability to identify and locate with precision individuals with nefarious intentions, address threats posed by biotechnology, neurotechnology and nanotechnology, bring massive new sensor, modeling and automation to bear on analytic processes and improve human and cultural intelligence.

“These actions will not be free, but this is an essential investment for our nation,” Swetnam stated in written testimony. “This Committee, the Congress and the President have given us smart legislation; now we need to focus on smart policy and adept execution to give that legislation full effect.”